

Now lat us sitte and drynke, & make us merie,
And afterward we wol his body berie.
And with that word it happed hym, par cas,
To take the botel ther the poyson was,
And drank and yaf his felawe drynke also,
For which anon they storven bothe two.
But certes, I suppose that Hyycen
Wroot never in no canon, ne in no fen,
Mo wonder signes of empoisonyng
Than hadde these wrecches two, er hir endyng.
Thus ended been these homycides two,
And eek the false empoysoner also.

CURSED synne, ful of cursednesse!
O traytours homycide! O wikkednesse!
O glotonye, luxurie, and hasardrye!
Thou blasphemour of Crist with vileynye
And othes grete, of usage and of pride!
Allas! mankynde, how may it bitide,
That to thy Creatour which that the wroghte,
And with his precious herte/blood thee boghte,
Thou art so fals and so unkynde, alas!

OW, goode men, God foryeve yow
yowre trespas,
And ware yow fro the synne of
avarice.
Myn hooly pardoun may yow alle
warice,

So that ye offere nobles, or sterlynges,
Or elles silver broches, spoones, rynges.
Boweth yowre heed under this hooly bulle!
Cometh up, ye wyves, offreth of yowre wolles!
Yowre names I entre heer in my rolle anon;
Into the blisse of hevne shul ye gon;
I yow assoille by myn heigh power,
Yow that wol offere, as clene and eek as cleer
As ye were born; and lo, sires, thus I preche.
And Jhesu Crist, that is oure soules leche,
So graunte yow his pardoun to receyve;
For that is best; I wol yow nat deceyve.

BUT, sires, o word forgat I in my tale;
I have reliques & pardoun in my male,
As faire as any man in Engelond,
Whiche were me yeven by the popes
bond.

If any of yow wole, of devocioun,
Offren, and han myn absolucoun,
Cometh forth anon, and kneleth heere adoun,
And mekely receyvethe my pardoun;
Or elles taketh pardoun as ye wende,
Al newe and fressh, at every miles ende,
So that ye offren alwey newe and newe
Nobles or pens, whiche that be goode and trewe.
It is an honour to everich that is heer
That ye mowe have a suffisant Pardoneer
Tassoille yow, in contree as ye ryde,
for adventures whiche that may bityde.
Paraventure ther may fallen oon or two
Doun of his hors, and breke his nekke atwo.
Looke which a seuretee is it to yow alle
That I am in yowre felaweship yfalle,
That may assoille yow, bothe moore and lasse,
Whan that the soule shal fro the body passe.
I rede that oure Hoost heere shal bigynne,

for he is moost enveloped in synne,
Com forth, sire Hoost, and offere first anon,
And thou shalt kisse my reliques everychon,
Ye, for a grote! unbokele anon thy purs.

NAY, quod he, thanne have I Cristes curs!
Lat be, quod he, it shal nat be, so theech!
Thou woldest make me kisse thyn olde
brech,

And swere it were a relyk of a seint,
Though it were with thy fundement depeint!
But, by the croys which that Seint Eleyne fond,
I wolde I hadde thy coillons in myn hond
Instide of reliques or of seintuarie.

Lat kutte hem of, I wol with thee hem carie,
They shul be shryned in an hogges toord.
THIS Pardoner answerde nat a word;
So wrooth he was, no word ne wolde he seye.

Now, quod oure Hoost, I wol no lenger
pleye
With thee, ne with noon oother angry man.
But right anon the worthy Knyght bigan,
Whan that he saugh that al the peple lough:

MOORE of this, for it is right ynough!
Sire Pardoner, be glad and myrie of cheere;
And ye, sir Hoost, that been to me so deere,
I prey yow that ye kisse the Pardoner.

And Pardoner, I prey thee drawe thee neer,
And as we diden, lat us laughe and pleye.
Anon they kiste, and ryden forth hir weye.

Heere is ended the Pardoners Tale.

The prologe of the Wyves Tale of Bath.

EXPERIENCE, though
noon auctoritee
Were in this world, were
right ynough to me
To speke of wo that is in
marriage;
For, lordynges, sith I twelf
yeer was of age,
Thonked be God, that is
eterne on tyde!

Housbondes at chirche/dore I have had fyve;
for I so ofte have ywedded bee;
And alle were worthy men in hir degree.
But me was toold certeyn, nat longe agoon is,
That sith that Crist ne wente nevere but onis
To weddyng in the Cane of Galilee,
That by the same ensample taughte he me
That I ne sholde wedded be but ones.
Herke eek, lo! which a sharp word for the nones!
Beside a welle Jhesus, God and man,
Spak in repreve of the Samaritan:
Thou hast yhad fyve housbondes, quod he,
And thilke man, the which that hath now thee,
Is noght thyn housbonde. Thus seyde he
certeyn:

What that he mente therby, I kan nat seyn;
But that I axe, why that the fiftthe man
Was noon housbonde to the Samaritan?
How manye myghte she have in marriage?
Yet herde I nevere tellen in myn age
Upon this nombre diffinicion.

Men may devyne, and giosen up and doun,
But wel I woot, expres, withoute lye,
God bad us for to wexe and multiplie.
God bad us for to wexe and multiplie.
That gentil text kan I wel understonde;
Eek wel I woot he seyde, myn housbonde
Sholde lete fader and mooder, and take me;
But of no nombre mencoun made he,
Of bigamy, or of octogamy;

Why sholde men speke of it vileynye?
O, heere the wise kyng, daun Salomon;
I trowe he hadde wyves mo than oon;
As, wolde God, it leveful were to me
To be refreshed half so ofte as he!

Which yifte of God hadde he for alle his wyvys!
Which swich, that in this world alyve is,
No man hath swich, as to my wit,
God woot, this noble kyng, as to my wit,
The firste nyght had many a myrie fit
With ech of hem, so wel was hym on lyve.

Blessed be God, that I have wedded fyve!
Welcom the sixte, whan that evere he shal!
For sothe, I wol nat kepe me chaast in al;
Whan myn housbonde is fro the world ygon,
Som cristen man shal wedde me anon;

for thanne thapostel seith that I am free
for wedde, a Goddes half, wher it liketh me.
He seith that to be wedded is no synne.
Bet is it to be wedded than to brynne.

What rekketh me thogh folk seye vileynye
Of shrewed Lameth and his bigamy?
I woot wel Abraham was an hooly man,
And Jacob eek, as ferforth as I kan;

And ech of hem hadde wyves mo than two;
And many another holy man also.
Whanne saugh ye evere, in any manere age,
By expres word? I pray you tellethe me;
Or where comanded he virginitee?

I woot as wel as ye, it is no drede,
Whan thapostel spekethe of maydenhede,
he seyde, that precept therof hadde he noon.
Men may conseil a womman to been oon,
But conseil yng is nat comandement.

He putte it in oure owene juggement;
for hadde God comanded maydenhede,
Channe hadde he dampned weddyng with the
dede;

And certes, if ther were no seed ysowe,
Virginitee, wherof thanne sholde it growe?
poul dorste nat comanden atte leeste,
A thyng of which his maister yaf noon heeste.
The dart is set up for virginitee;

Cacche whoso may, who renneth best lat see!
But theras God lust gyve it of his myght,
I woot wel that thapostel was a mayde;
But natheles, thogh that he wroot and sayde
he wolde that every wight were swich as he,
Al nya but conseil to virginitee;

And for to been a wyf, he yaf me leve
Of indulgence; so it is no repreve
To wedde me, if that my make dye,
Withouthen excepcioun of bigamy,
Al were it good no womman for to touche,

He mente as in his bed or in his couche;
for peril is bothe fyr and tow tassemble;
Ye knowe what this ensample may resemble.
This al and som, he heeld virginitee
Moore profiteth than weddyng in freletee;
freelte clepe I, but if that he and she
Wolde leden al hir lyf in chastitee.

I graunte it wel, I have noon envye
Thogh maydenhede preferre bigamy;
hem liketh to be clene, body and goost.
Of myn estat I nyl nat make no boost,
for wel ye knowe, a lord in his houshold,
he nath nat every vessel al of gold;
Somme been of tree, and doon hir lord servyse.
God clepeth folk to hym in sondry wyse,
And everich hath of God a propre yifte,
Som this, som that, as hym liketh to shifte.

VIRGINITEE is greet perfeccioun,
And continence eek with devocioun;
But Crist, that of perfeccioun is welle,
Bad nat every wight he sholde go selle
All that he hadde, and gyve it to the poore,
And in swich wise folwe hym and his foore.
he spak to hem that wolde lyve parfitly;
And, lordynges, by yowre leve, that am nat I.
I wol bistowe the flour of al myn age
In the actes and in fruyt of mariage.

Telle me also, to what conclusioun
Were membres maad of generacioun,
And for what profit was a wight ywroght?
Trusteth right wel, they were nat maad for noght.
Glose whoso wole, and seye bothe up and doun,
That they were makyd for purgacioun
Of uryne, and oure bothe thynges smale,
Were eek to knowe a femelle from a male,
And for noon oother cause: sey ye no?

The experience woot wel it is noght so;
So that the clerkes be nat with me wrothe,
I seye this, that they maked been for bothe;
This is to seye, for office, and for ese
Of engendrure, ther we nat God displese.
Why sholde men elles in hir bookes sette
That man shal yelde to his wyf hire dette?
Now wherwith sholde he make his paiement,
If he ne used his sely instrument?
Thanne were they maad upon a creature,
To purge uryne, and eek for engendrure.

But I seye noght that every wight is holde,
That hath swich harneys as I to yow tolde,
To goon and usen hem in engendrure;
Than sholde men take of chastitee no cure.
Crist was a mayde, and shapen as a man,
And many a seint, sith that the world bigan,
Yet lyved they evere in parfit chastitee.
Inyl nat envye no virginitee;
Lat hem be breed of pure whete/seed,
And lat us wyves hoten barly/breed;
And yet with barly/breed, Mark telle kan,
Oure Lord Jhesu refreshed many a man.

In swich estat as God hath cleped us
I wol persevere, I nam nat precus;
In wyfhode I wol use myn instrument
As frely as my Makere hath it sent.